

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Aviation Management

Part 352: Aviation Safety

Chapter 3: Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation, and Reporting

Originating Office: National Business Center

352 DM 3

3.1 **Purpose.** This chapter establishes procedures for the notification and reporting of aircraft accidents and incidents occurring during Interior aviation activities. These provisions are applicable to all owned or operated aircraft or those under the operational control of the Department of the Interior. Aircraft mishap reports cannot be used in lieu of reports prescribed in 451 DM 1, “Tort Claims Against the United States,” and 485 DM 5, “Program Evaluations.”

3.2 **Authority.** Title 49 U.S.C., Chapter 11, “National Transportation Safety Board” (NTSB), establishes the authority for the NTSB and the conduct of aviation accident investigations. 49 CFR 830 establishes the notification and reporting procedures for all civil and public aircraft accidents and incidents. 41 CFR Part 102-33, “Management of Government Aircraft,” establishes policy for the management of all federally funded aviation activities of executive agencies of the U.S. Government. 41 CFR Part 102-33, sections 102-33.180 and 102-33.185, address standards that must be established or required for flight program safety and standards for responding to aircraft accidents and incidents. Departmental Manual 112 DM 10 delegates to the National Business Center (NBC) Aviation Management Directorate (AMD) the responsibility to establish and manage a Department-wide accident/incident and aviation hazard reporting system, to investigate aircraft mishaps occurring in Departmental aviation operations in cooperation with the NTSB, and to represent the Department on all aircraft accident investigations where the Department has involvement. 350 DM 1, appendix 5 defines terms and abbreviations associated with aviation mishaps (i.e. accidents, incidents-with-potential, incidents, hazards, etc.).

3.3 **Policy.** In an effort to prevent further aircraft mishaps, it is the responsibility of all Interior employees to report known aircraft mishaps, aviation hazards, and maintenance deficiencies. It is the Department of the Interior’s policy to investigate Departmental aircraft mishaps using one of the following investigative procedures:

A. **Onsite Investigations:** Will be conducted whenever possible for all aircraft accidents and selected Incidents-With-Potential (IWP).

B. **Limited Investigations:** Will be conducted for selected IWPs. A limited investigation will not normally include a visit to the mishap site.

C. **Administrative Investigations:** Will be conducted for reports of conditions,

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observances, acts, maintenance problems, or circumstances which may have the potential to cause an aircraft mishap.

3.4 Aircraft Mishap Notification. Aircraft under the operational control of the Department of the Interior that are involved in an accident or incident involving damage, injury, or overdue aircraft suspected of being involved in a mishap shall be reported to the NBC AMD Aviation Safety Manager immediately by the most expeditious means available. For additional information regarding initial notification of an aircraft mishap and the aircraft accident checklist, Bureau/NTSB Notification and the SAFECOM Format, see the *Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation and Reporting Handbook*, section 2.1.

3.5 Mishap Response Plan. Response to an aircraft mishap requires preplanned actions. Time is an extremely critical factor in responding to emergency situations. Unnecessary delays in responding to a mishap may adversely affect the survival of the crewmembers and passengers. All Interior entities utilizing aviation resources (other than scheduled air carriers) will prepare a Mishap Response Plan for its flight operations. The purpose of the plan is to provide direction and reduce confusion when responding to an aircraft mishap. The *Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist* (National Fire Equipment System (NFES) 2659, www.nwcg.gov; www.nbc.gov/amd) is available as a resource to assist in the development of a mishap response plan. For additional information regarding the required contents of a Mishap Response Plan see the *Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation and Reporting Handbook*, section 2.2.

3.6 Aircraft Mishap Onsite Investigations. Departmental aircraft mishap investigation activities shall be given priority over all other investigations of the same mishap except for NTSB investigations. The NBC AMD Aviation Safety Manager will be responsible for coordinating Departmental investigations with the NTSB and will serve as the Department's point-of-contact and party to the investigation. For additional information regarding aircraft mishap on-site investigations see the *Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation and Reporting Handbook*, section 3.1.

3.7 Aircraft Mishap Initial Alert, Preliminary and Interim Report, and Mishap File.

A. Aircraft Mishap Initial Alert. Where possible, an electronic Aircraft Mishap Initial Alert will be issued within 24 hours of notification of a known or suspected aircraft accident. In some cases, aircraft mishap initial alerts may be delayed due to remote locations and inadequate communication capabilities.

B. NTSB Preliminary Report. The NTSB IIC will generally post a preliminary aircraft accident report to their Web site within 5 to 7 working days following an accident. The NTSB's aviation accident database contains information about civil aviation accidents and selected incidents within the United States, its territories and possessions, and in international waters. The NTSB's Accident Database and Synopses is available on the NTSB's Web site at www.nts.gov.

C. Interim Report. A written interim accident report, that may contain new information that has not yet been disseminated via previous alerts or the NTSB's preliminary report, will be

released within 90 days of an aircraft accident, following the concurrence of the NTSB's IIC.

D. Aircraft Mishap File. The NBC AMD Aviation Safety Manager will create an aircraft mishap file for all Interior onsite and selected limited investigations. The aircraft mishap file will include information of interest to Interior that may not be addressed in the NTSB's accident investigation report. The NBC AMD Associate Director will forward the final Departmental aircraft mishap investigative report to the bureau exercising operational control of the aircraft at the time of the mishap following the Aircraft Mishap Review Board. If a SAFECOM form leads to a safety investigation and creation of an aircraft mishap file, the SAFECOM form shall not become a part of the mishap file.

3.8 Use of Aircraft Mishap Files.

A. General. When requested by the head of a parallel Interior investigation group, the NBC AMD Aviation Safety Manager may release facts relating to the mishap after coordination with the NTSB. Privacy information shall be withheld. While mishap facts are provided to preclude unnecessary duplication of onsite investigation efforts, a parallel investigation group must reach its own conclusions pertaining to personal liability or fault.

B. Authorized Use. Aircraft mishap files may be used for any lawful purpose, including, but not limited to, the revocation process in accordance with 351 DM 3.6G(2).

3.9 Release of Information.

A. Release of Information Policy. The NBC AMD Aviation Safety Manager is the Custodian of Record for Interior Mishap Information. Information received as a result of participation in an NTSB investigation shall be handled in accordance with 49 CFR 831.13 and shall be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as amended, and the Privacy Act of 1974. Specifically, items such as photographs, factual data, or any documentation directly related to the investigation shall not be released until the NBC AMD Investigator-In-Charge (IIC) complies with NTSB 830. Air Safety Investigators (ASI's) or other investigators, including all parties to the investigation, shall not make public their own opinions, conclusions, or recommendations in their capacity as a member of the investigation team.

B. Accident Prevention Publications. Following coordination with and concurrence of the NTSB's IIC, investigation information may be released and incorporated into accident prevention publications such as Aircraft Mishap Initial Alerts, Aircraft Accident Prevention Bulletins, Safety Alerts, Lessons Learned Publications, Interim Reports, and/or a Final Report.

C. Requests for Mishap Information. All requests for copies of NBC AMD aircraft mishap files shall be referred to the NBC AMD FOIA Officer for action.

D. Requests for NTSB Accident Reports. Request for copies of the NTSB's accident investigation reports shall be referred to Public Inquiries, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

3.10 Aviation Mishap Information System.

A. Aviation Mishap Information System (AMIS) Definition. The AMIS is an electronic database, which encompasses all aspects of aviation mishap reporting within DOI. Categories of reports include aircraft accidents, incidents-with-potential, incidents, aviation hazards, aircraft maintenance deficiencies, and airspace intrusions.

B. The Aviation Safety Communique' (SAFECOM). The AMIS system uses the Aviation Safety Communique' "SAFECOM", Form AMD-34/FS1500-14 to report any condition, observance, act, maintenance problem, or circumstance, which has the potential to cause an aviation-related mishap. A SAFECOM's sole purpose is for mishap prevention. Use of a SAFECOM for any other purpose is prohibited. A SAFECOM is not intended to fix blame and should not be utilized in disciplinary action against any employee.

C. SAFECOM Submissions. Any person directly associated with aviation activities within the Department of the Interior may submit a SAFECOM. This includes contractors and other government personnel in support of DOI aviation activities. SAFECOMs may be submitted via the Internet or as a hard copy via the mail. The preferred method is through the Internet at <http://www.safecom.gov>. Hard copy SAFECOMs may be submitted through bureau channels or direct to the NBC AMD Aviation Safety Office. Regardless of the method used, the submitter should always retain a copy for their records.

D. Use of SAFECOMs. Submitting a SAFECOM is not a substitute for "on-the-spot" corrections(s) to a safety concern. Rather, the SAFECOM is a tool used to document and track safety concerns and follow-up corrective action(s) related to those safety concerns. However, it is important to remember that the utilization of the SAFECOM does not replace the requirement for initiating a DI-134, "*Report of Accident/Incident,*" as required in Departmental Manual 485 DM 5.

NOTE: A suspension is an impermanent withdrawal of DOI pilot authorization pending investigation of a safety concern and pending completion of specified actions or conditions. It is intended to provide a "strategic pause" in operations to afford a review of the circumstances surrounding a safety concern. It is neither a punitive nor disciplinary action. As a temporary suspension, non-disciplinary in nature, a SAFECOM may be used in the suspension process, 351 DM 3.6G(1).

E. Information Derived from the Investigative Process. While the SAFECOM itself shall not be used for any purpose other than mishap prevention, any information discovered or further developed during the investigation of a safety concern, even if initially described in a SAFECOM, may be used for any lawful purpose including, but not limited to, placement of information obtained from a SAFECOM in the aircraft mishap file and as evidence in the revocation process, in accordance with 351 DM 3.6G(2)

F. Management Support of the SAFECOM system. All levels of management shall promote the AMIS program. SAFECOMs should be placed in areas where they are available to all individuals involved in aviation activities. Prompt replies to the originator and timely

corrective actions will encourage continued program participation.

G. SAFECOM Access and Follow-up. The NBC AMD Aviation Safety Manager shall ensure that SAFECOMs are stored in an electronic database and that access to the system is provided to bureau aviation program management personnel for corrective action follow-up as necessary. The responsibility for regularly reviewing the data base and taking appropriate corrective action rests initially with the bureaus. Bureau Aviation Safety Managers are encouraged to provide feedback to SAFECOM submitters and to resolve aviation safety related issues identified within SAFECOMs at the lowest possible level. Appropriate action shall be taken on identified Departmental aviation safety concerns by the NBC AMD, following coordination with appropriate bureau aviation program management personnel.

3.11 Interior Aircraft Mishap Review Board. An Interior Aircraft Mishap Review Board (AMRB) is responsible for developing mishap prevention recommendations for all DOI accidents and selected IWPs. Specific responsibilities, functions, and procedures to be followed are in accordance with the *Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation, and Reporting Handbook*, Chapter 5, Aircraft Mishap Review Board.